Lower School Principal
Ursuline Academy
Wilmington, Delaware
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The Opportunity

Founded in 1893, Ursuline Academy traces its origins to 1535 when Angela Merici, a woman in her 60's, founded the Company of St. Ursula. Almost 500 years later, the Ursuline movement she founded continues to espouse the core values of academic excellence, service, spirituality, community, social justice, openness to change, and leadership. Today, the students of Ursuline Academy live out these core values in the way they treat each other, serve their community, and prepare for an ever-changing world. Ursuline Academy seeks a Lower School Principal who will carry on the tradition of St. Angela Merici while leading the school’s vital elementary division.

Ursuline Academy is an independent, Catholic school community that empowers students for leadership and service in our global society.

Ursuline Academy’s talented faculty focus on helping students become disciples, citizens, thinkers, and pioneers. Achieving this goal begins with the early childhood Montessori program, offered to students ages three to six, bridging into a Lower School focused on content and skill development in a nurturing environment. Students reach their potential through hands-on discovery, cultural enrichment, and Christian love. Teachers foster creativity, thoughtfulness, and innovation while focusing on each individual student’s learning style. The result is a division where students have a positive sense of self and compassion for others.

The Ursuline Sisters embrace the values of inclusiveness and open-mindedness, and nearly 40% of the student body self-identify as non-Catholic. One of the core beliefs of the Ursuline Sisters is self-reflection and a call for a thoughtful approach to change. The change in leadership in the Lower School has represented a time for the school to reflect on this important division’s strengths and opportunities for growth. Ursuline Academy seeks candidates who will embrace what has made the school special for over 125 years while helping to ensure its relevance for years to come.

Ursuline Academy is a Catholic day school serving 415 students in early childhood through grade 12. Ursuline is coeducational through grade 5 and all girls from grades 6 to 12.

To Apply

Ursuline Academy has selected Southern Teachers to lead the search for its next Lower School Principal. For application instructions, please see the last page of this profile.
Performance Objectives

Area 1: Curriculum

By the end of his or her first year, the new Lower School Principal will develop and articulate a clear vision for the division’s program and its impact on student learning and outcomes. Working with the Middle and Upper School Principals, the Lower School Principal will ensure vertical alignment of the curriculum so that Ursuline will continue to provide a seamless educational program.

Area 2: Faculty

The Lower School faculty at Ursuline is one of its greatest strengths. These dedicated professionals are a cohesive, caring group. It is a faculty that enjoys and thrives on strong leadership and meeting challenges set before them. The strength of the Ursuline program today is a testament to the teachers’ hard work and commitment to the children and the school.

The Lower School Principal will provide leadership to the faculty and, working with teachers, help define the vision for the Lower School. He or she will serve as the faculty’s voice with the administrative team and ensure that they are supported in their craft. The Lower School Principal will continue to support teachers who want to work in innovative ways and to utilize and share professional development.

In the coming years, the school anticipates some healthy turnover due to retirements that will require the next Lower School Principal to recruit, develop, and retain the next generation of outstanding teachers for Ursuline Academy.

Area 3: Admissions

The Lower School, particularly the Montessori program and kindergarten, is a key entry point for Ursuline students. Therefore, the Lower School Principal partners closely with the admissions staff on recruiting, evaluating, and admitting students. Attracting mission-appropriate students and families and bringing them into the Ursuline community, in what is a highly competitive independent market, is paramount.

The Lower School Principal will need to continue to craft the message to the community, articulating exactly why Ursuline is a great value and how its program provides an excellent opportunity for the families of Wilmington. In particular, the school is committed to expanding its racial, ethnic, and socio-economic diversity.

Area 4: Technology

Ursuline has made significant additions to technology in the classroom in recent years. In addition to having SMART Boards in every classroom, the Lower School also utilizes iPad carts and a computer lab.

The Lower School Principal will continue to examine hardware, software, and professional development to ensure that Ursuline is meeting its goal of producing technologically savvy students ready to face the challenges of a modern economy and society.

Strategic Plan

The 2018-19 school year was Ursuline Academy’s 125th anniversary. True to its founding principles, the school celebrated its history in part by looking forward to its future. The result was a four-year strategic plan with three main pillars that inform the goals for the next Lower School Principal. The strategic plan laid out a commitment to:

- Providing transformative learning for students through innovative and purposeful instruction in STEM and humanities, integrating the school’s robust global programs both in and out of classrooms, expanding financial literacy throughout the curriculum at all grade levels, developing an updated, comprehensive education technology strategic plan, and attracting and retaining outstanding faculty.
- Funding the future and enhancing facilities, honoring the campus history while designing flexible spaces that support collaborative learning and securing the school’s financial future through careful enrollment planning and building the endowment.
- Embracing the Ursuline experience by infusing the Ursuline charism into daily life, fostering an environment of inclusivity, encouraging positive risk-taking to develop resilience, guiding students to understand their individual learning styles while ensuring they have the support they need, and fostering collaboration between the divisions and alumnae to strengthen peer-to-peer relationships and mentoring programs.

Though the new Lower School Principal will start at Ursuline mid-way through the timeline for the current strategic plan, these goals will be ongoing and should inform the new Principal’s goals and priorities in his or her first years.
The Position

Reporting to the President, the Lower School Principal communicates the philosophy, mission, and vision of the Academy, emphasizing the centrality of Ursuline core values and the heritage of St. Angela Merici. The principal is responsible for the overall management, spiritual and instructional leadership, and supervision of the Lower School.

Duties

School Operations and Academics

- Maintains a safe, healthful environment within the Academy for both the students and staff
- Provides for adequate safety instruction and drills and assigns members of the staff to assume specified responsibilities
- Supervises and participates in the development, preparation, and revision of curriculum for all programs of study in the Lower School incorporating innovative teaching techniques and strategies
- Prepares school programs and creates master schedule for faculty and students
- Establishes and communicates performance standards, setting high expectations for staff and students, and holds school community accountable for high-level performance
- Observes employee performance and conducts evaluations of staff
- Plans strategically for short-term and long-term academic success in conjunction with the Leadership Team
- Provides instructional resources and materials to support teaching staff in accomplishing instructional goals while consistently works to improve instruction and student achievement
- Oversees and assists in the admissions process, testing, interviewing, and evaluating applicants for enrollment
- Ensures compliance with legal requirements and government regulations
- Ensures proper and thorough record-keeping and maintains policies required to sustain accreditations
- Oversees the operations of all Lower School extra-curricular activities
- Oversees staffing for arrival and dismissal by car line
- Oversees the Extended Day and Summer Fun Programs in collaboration with the Business Office

School Culture

- Fosters collegiality and team building among staff members; supports the academy and its leaders
- Fosters an environment of inclusivity that celebrates and welcomes the diverse members of our community
- Recognizes excellence and achievement
- Builds common vision for academy improvement with staff
- Defines expectations for staff performance regarding instructional strategies, classroom management, and communication with the public
- In connection with the Academy’s leadership, supports, designs, and implements professional development, including in-service programs
- As a member of the Leadership Team, contributes to decisions and strategies that guide the entire school

Financial Management

- Develops the annual Lower School budget and ensures that spending stays within those limits
- Presents the need for additional resources, equipment, and supplies to the President or the Business Office

Community Relations

- Communicates the Academy’s philosophy, mission and vision to various stakeholders in the school community
- Interacts closely with parents about academic, social and emotional matters that arise for students in the Lower School
- Attends and participates in all major fundraisers and social events of the Lower School
- Maintains a rapport with the Diocese of Wilmington
Qualifications

Requirements

• Master’s Degree in Education or Administration
• Significant teaching experience required; administrative experience preferred
• Must be a practicing Catholic, in good standing with the Church

Competencies

• Working knowledge of curriculum and instruction as well as the ability to evaluate instructional programs and teaching effectiveness
• Ability to interpret policy, procedures, and data
• Strong organizational, communication, public relations, and interpersonal skills
• Focus on continuous improvement and learning
• Ability to manage budgets and personnel
• Ability to use computer technology for daily tasks

The School

Students experiencing an Ursuline education become change makers, positively affecting the world around them. In the spirit of St. Angela Merici, it is Ursuline Academy’s vision to change the world through the education of future leaders and influencers. An Ursuline education is centered on the belief that powerful leaders bring positive change when they feel they are part of something bigger than themselves.

Ursuline Academy serves over 400 students in four divisions: Early Childhood, Lower School, Middle School, and Upper School. Since its founding in 1893, Ursuline Academy has been guided by the values and mission of the Ursuline Sisters, who established the school over a century ago and remain deeply involved in teaching and governance at UA today. Amongst the Ursuline Sisters’ core beliefs is a commitment to self-reflective adaptation in changing times—a principle set forth by the Foundress of the Ursulines. St. Angela Merici sought to provide all girls, regardless of means, with access to a holistic and empowering religious education.

History

Ursuline Academy was founded in 1893 when Bishop Curtis of the Diocese of Wilmington invited the Ursuline Sisters to take over a school formerly run by the Visitation Sisters. The school was moved and reopened as Ursuline Academy and in the subsequent 125 years has flourished and expanded. Following its founding tradition, Ursuline Academy has adapted to changing times and circumstances. It has also committed deeply to providing educational opportunity to every capable and interested student, regardless of financial means. Ursuline Academy has steadily increased its tuition assistance, now offering aid and scholarships to 55% of its students.

Ursuline Education

Ursuline Academy was founded by the Order of St. Ursula, a Catholic sisterhood dating back to 16th-century Italy. St. Angela Merici established the Ursulines in Brescia, Italy, in 1535. A century later, after expanding to France, the Company of St. Ursula formally began schools for girls at a time when education was only accessible to women of wealthy classes and those who entered a convent. As such, the Ursuline Sisters were true pioneers from the outset—innovative, courageous, and independent in an era when such traits were not expected of women. They became the first Catholic nuns to settle in North America when they set out to bring Christianity to Native American and French settlers in Quebec in 1639. Their work in North America continued to expand as the Ursuline Sisters established schools throughout the eastern part of the continent over the next few centuries. Their Catholic school system in the Louisiana Territory—the first in the region—served free and enslaved African Americans in addition to French settlers. Today, Ursuline schools flourish in over 36 countries serving over 40,000 students.
School Community

Coeducational in the Early Childhood and Lower School divisions, Ursuline Academy transitions at the Middle School to provide an all-girls education through Grade 12. One of the great strengths of Ursuline Academy is the connection students feel to the overall school no matter their age. The program provides many opportunities for students to connect across divisions, and the culture is one that celebrates these connections. In 2017, Ursuline launched and officially inducted the first members of the community into a new House System. The goal of this House System is to provide an opportunity for students, faculty, staff, and alumnae to build community, promote unity, and create new traditions.

Ursuline’s House System organizes our students, faculty, staff, and alumnae into three houses: Points, Novas, and Caps. Each house is based on one of Ursuline’s founding patron saints; St. Angela Merici, St. Ursula, and St. Marie of the Incarnation and incorporates colors and symbols related to their saint’s history and house groupings will be determined by high school graduation year. Students are inducted into their houses beginning in Montessori 5/Kindergarten and remain lifelong members. Early childhood students are recognized as Little Skippers and are included in many of the House System activities before being formally inducted into their permanent houses.

Ursuline is also committed to connecting students to the world beyond its campus. As a part of the Ursuline Education Network (UEN), Ursuline Academy offers a uniquely global educational experience to its students. Students across all four divisions develop a sense of connection not only with their peers in the classroom but with the wider community of more than 100 outstanding Catholic schools and colleges in the UEN worldwide.

Catholic in denomination, the Ursuline Sisters have long embraced values of inclusiveness and open-mindedness—as is evident in the diverse religious makeup of Ursuline’s student body. The culture is warm, welcoming, spirited, and imbued with the powerful and character-building Ursuline charism of “Serviam”—meaning “I will serve.”

The strength of the Ursuline community, both past and present, and the influence of academic excellence not only...
ensure the growth of the school’s legacy for decades to come but also create a comprehensive and collaborative learning environment in which students can thrive today. Ursuline alumnae, over 4,750 strong, speak enthusiastically of the great impact Ursuline has had on their lives, giving them the confidence, perseverance, and courage to follow their dreams and pursue challenging life work.

The Lower School

Ursuline Academy’s Lower School provides a warm and welcoming learning environment with a sense of community and a nurturing family atmosphere. Teachers partner with parents and know the students well, including those students they do not teach.

Ursuline’s early childhood program offers both a one-year traditional kindergarten and a mixed age, three-year Montessori program, which dates back to 1964. Two American Montessori Society trained teachers lead the Montessori classes. The Montessori curriculum at all levels includes opportunities for community service within and beyond the school community, outdoor exploration and education, and experiences outside the classroom to expand learning. To address the needs of the whole child, the curriculum promotes the students’ cognitive, physical, social-emotional, spiritual, and psychological development. Activities provide purpose, procedure, closure, and opportunity for success.

Students in grades one to five deepen their intellectual and social development, while strengthening problem solving and gaining deeper understanding of concepts as students become involved, responsible participants in their own learning. Students learn to analyze, synthesize and think critically, listen carefully and ask questions, appreciate diverse perspectives, and cooperate and collaborate with others. Students gain confidence and model the spirit of Serviam as they develop into student leaders in the Lower School.

Global Education

Ursuline Academy commits to educating global leaders focusing on the Ursuline mission through active service, intellectual enrichment, co-curricular programs both locally and abroad, sister school relationships, and other global partnerships. Ursuline Academy is a member of the Global Network of Ursuline Schools representing more than 105 Ursuline schools throughout the world all founded on the principles of St. Angela Merici.

At all grade levels, Montessori through 12th grade, students engage in a variety of transformative experiences, which help them grow in global competence. As they get to know and touch the realities of other cultures, they gain new appreciation for different perspectives and a better understanding of what it means to be a citizen of the world. They also have the opportunity to share a unique sisterhood with students around the globe.

Ursuline students further their global citizenship through activities, events, programs, and services that embrace and promote multicultural views and perspectives. From the local community in our classroom where students Skype with peers from across the globe to serving as a delegate on one of our many domestic and international exchange trips, Ursuline students engage with and learn from a worldwide network of sister schools and global partnerships. This rich international exchange program invites all students to immerse themselves by connecting on virtual projects, serving as host families for visiting students as well as representing Ursuline as a delegate on exchange trips.
The School (Continued)

Campus
The campus at Ursuline Academy is located in the Cool Spring and Tilton Park section of the west side of Wilmington. The main campus consists of three buildings, the Lower school, the Upper School, and the Fusco Student Life Center, the result of a $13M renovation of the former convent completed in January 2019. Of note in Fusco Hall is the library. As the former chapel, many of the original elements remain including the stained-glass windows, wooden beams, and balcony. The confessional rooms are now small group study rooms. It is a stunning space that generations of Ursuline students will enjoy. Serviam Field is located approximately 10 minutes from school and serves as the location for all track sports as well as field sports.

Portrait of an Ursuline Educator

I LOVE—I celebrate the soul at the center of each student. I welcome all families into our Ursuline story. I embrace my profession as a calling to serve each of my students.

I DELIGHT—I am a companion in learning, reveling in the spark I see reflected in my students. I applaud my students’ limitless successes and bolster their spirit in their inevitable adversities. I laugh kindly, at myself, with my students, and in our spaces.

I PROCLAIM—I embrace the guiding teachings of our foundational mother, St. Angela Merici, and the Ursuline Sisters. I echo the Disciples of Christ in my commitment to our motto: Serviam. I emblazon the boldness of St. Ursula, the brilliance of St. Angela, and the courage of St. Marie of the Incarnation.

I GO—I vault forward, mindful of the steps that shaped my path. I am a student myself, becoming a vanguard of new technology and philosophy. I go where the students are, meeting them at their level and raising them up with me.

I WEAVE—I thoughtfully share myself and my students with families, each other, and the world. I engender a sense of home in my classroom – creating a space where students feel safe and valued. I harmonize our strengths, creating sonorous music within our staff.

I KINDLE—I tend the embers of students’ curiosity and stoke the flames of their learning. I fuel the fire of opportunity with ownership in action. I marvel in the twinkling glory of our students.
The Community

Established in 1731, Wilmington is the most populous city in Delaware. Though located within easy driving distance of Philadelphia, New York, and Washington, DC, Wilmington is a relatively small town with a population just over 70,000. Nearly 18% of Wilmington’s student population attends one of the area’s several exceptional private primary and secondary level institutions—making Wilmington a top-ten city for private school enrollment nationwide.

Wilmington is a city rich in history. Old Swedes Church was erected in 1698 and is still in use, and the Harriet Tubman Byway of the Underground Railroad runs right through downtown Wilmington. On Market Street, Willington Square hosts several of the city’s oldest residential structures, and Rodney Square is the central public space that honors Delaware’s vote for colonial independence.

Wilmington celebrates a diversity of cultures and lifestyles. Wilmington’s burgeoning restaurant scene on Market Street, Union Street, and in Trolley Square provide all a foodie could want. Art lovers enjoy access to Delaware Art Museum, dozens of galleries, live music venues like The Grand Opera House and Live Nation at The Queen, and the state’s premier centers for the performing arts. Outdoor enthusiasts have access to 552 acres of parks, ranging from neighborhood pocket parks to Brandywine Park’s winding trails through thick forest, perfect for joggers and cyclists. Wilmington is a city of beautiful neighborhoods, abundant housing, and affordable living. Downtown has restored brownstones and high-rise residential towers, communities in the hills offer the comfort of country living, and between the two sit dozens of row home neighborhoods with their own unique history and character. The Riverfront, a new district forged from a former shipyard and industry hub, is one of the city’s hottest destinations with its dynamic live-work-play environment.

More than half of all Fortune 500 companies call Wilmington their corporate home. The city offers a dynamic environment for more than 40,000 workers and is the corporate, financial, and governmental hub of the state and region.

Application Process & Timeline

For consideration, candidates for the Lower School Principal position should submit applications to Southern Teachers [available at SouthernTeachers.com] along with a current resume and a cover letter explaining their interest in and qualifications for this leadership position.

Questions may be directed to Mr. Jamie Estes at Estes@SouthernTeachers.com or 434-295-9122.

Initial interviews with the consultant at Southern Teachers will be ongoing.

The new Lower School Principal will begin work July 2020.